DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 134 883 CG 011 058

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TITLE The Vancouver Elementary Schools Area Counsellor Services and the Area Counsellor Training Program. A Study Prepared for the Vancouver School Board. Research Report No. 75-03.
INSTITUTION Vancouver Board of School Trustees (British Columbia). Education Services Group.
PUB DATE Apr 75
NOTE 54p.; Not Available in hard copy due to marginal legibility of original document.

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.83 Plus Postage. HC Not Available from EDRS.
DESCRIPTORS Consultation Programs; *Counseling Services; *Counselor Training; Educational Research; Elementary Education; *Elementary School Counselors; *Elementary School Guidance; *Field Interviews; Program Evaluation; Surveys
IDENTIFIERS *British Columbia (Vancouver)

ABSTRACT

This study is concerned with an examination of the area counsellor services in Vancouver elementary schools and the support program of training for area counsellors. Information, opinions and suggestions were sought from a wide number of individuals and agencies having some connection with or interest in the services. It is recognized first of all that the area counsellors are providing a service which it would be difficult or impossible to replace. Several things combine, however, to hinder it from being as effective as it could be. These are dealt with in the recommendations which suggest an adjustment of the work load. This involves a careful setting down of priorities, greater understanding among staff and other specialists of the role of the area counsellor, and avoidance as far as possible of duplication of effort. Continuity of service at each school is also an important factor. The flexibility and continuing revision of the training program are commended. The practicum, recently introduced, is an important addition, and should be developed and extended, so that the trainee is able to experience as far as possible what it means to be an area counsellor. The program can offer a unique in-service training providing as it does practical preparation through involvement with the working operations of the schools and their related specialists and agencies. In sum it can be said that Vancouver elementary schools would be much the poorer without the area counsellor services, supported as they are by a preparation program virtually impossible to parallel. (Author)

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THE VANCOUVER ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS

AREA COUNSELLOR SERVICES

and

THE AREA COUNSELLOR TRAINING PROGRAM

A STUDY

PREPARED FOR

THE VANCOUVER SCHOOL BOARD

April, 1 9 7 5

Philip J. Kitley

Research Report No. 75-03

Evaluation and Research
Education Services Group
Board of School Trustees
1595 West 10th Avenue
Vancouver, B. C.
V6J 1Z8

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U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH
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NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF
EDUCATION

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The child must learn from parents, from those who teach and from those who counsel, for a period of fifteen to twenty years. This is a fourth of his life span in which he must be cared for and be guided in opportunities for learning. No other creature has this period of dependence and care, and only love can make it possible.

- Gilbert Wrenn -

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ABSTRACT

This study is concerned with an examination of the area counsellor services in Vancouver elementary schools and the support program of training for area counsellors.

Information, opinions and suggestions were sought from a wide number of individuals and agencies having some connection with or interest in the services.

Since "counsellor" has so loose a definition and so varied an application it is important to decide on as exact as possible a definition of the area counsellor's duties. In a broad sense they may be summed up as "counselling, consultation and coordination". The history of the development of the service in Vancouver is an indication of the place the area counsellor occupies. In the eighteen years since the inception of the service not only have great changes taken place in society at large and the school as a social agent, but corresponding changes have occurred in the role of the school counsellor.

It is recognized first of all that the area counsellors are providing a service which it would be difficult or impossible to replace. Several things combine, however, to hinder it from being as effective as it could be. These are dealt with in the recommendations which suggest an adjustment of the work load. This involves a careful setting down of priorities, greater understanding among staff and other specialists of the role of the area counsellor, and avoidance as far as possible of duplication of effort. Continuity of service at each school is also an important factor.

The flexibility and continuing revision of the training program are commended. The practicum, recently introduced, is an important addition, and should be developed and extended, so that the trainee is able to experience as far as possible what it means to be an area counsellor. The program can offer a unique in-service training providing as it does practical preparation through involvement with the working operations of the schools and their related specialists and agencies.

In sum it can be said that Vancouver elementary schools would be much the poorer without the area counsellor services, supported as they are by a preparation program virtually impossible to parallel.

1. Survey Details.

This study has been undertaken for the purpose of assessing and evaluating the suitability and effectiveness of services to Vancouver elementary schools by area counsellors, and at the same time of examining the appropriateness and effectiveness of the area-counsellor training program. In connection with the study, discussions have been held with a wide variety of people who might have any concern with the services, and information has also been gathered from a number of relevant sources through questionnaire and invited comment. These were the sources contacted, and the means used:

Elementary school principals and teachers -- information gathering questionnaire.

Area counsellors in training -- discussion and interview.

Area counsellors in service -- questionnaire and discussion.

Personnel previously enrolled in area counsellor training programs -- questionnaire.

Lecturers participating in the area-counsellor training program -- invited comment.

Secondary School Principals -- interview.

Learning Assistance Teachers -- discussion.

Area Assistant Superintendents -- discussion.

Central Staff Coordinators -- discussion.

Psychological Services staff -- discussion.

Other appropriate School Board staff -- interview.

Metropolitan Health representatives, including school nurses -- interview and discussion.

Community Services -- telephone interview.

Parent-Teacher Association -- telephone discussion.

Representatives of Faculties of Education of the University of British Columbia and Simon Fraser University -- interview.

Lay and professional members of the Vancouver Association for Children with Learning Disabilities -- interview.

Members of the Vancouver Elementary School Teachers' Association -- interview.

2. The Work of the Area Counsellor.

In order to provide background for the study, some accepted definitions of the school counsellor might well be considered. The term is a broad one, encompassing a number of areas of concern, with emphasis varying from authority to authority and jurisdiction to jurisdiction. One authority [1] sums up the responsibilities neatly under "counselling, consultation and coordination". The first of these refers generally to the child, the second to others who work with the child, the third primarily to agencies or individuals that might serve the child. All authorities recognize that there are important differences between counselling at the secondary and elementary school levels. At the secondary level the primary emphasis is on counselling of students. A recent Vancouver School Board memorandum [2] details the responsibilities of elementary school counsellors, stating a major function to be "meeting the individual counselling needs of students, parents, and on some occasions teachers". Further, they have a responsibility "to encourage a developmental approach for viewing children as individuals", "to work with a basic team within the school", to "do liaison with and coordination of other community agencies". Even without referring to the other details of the memorandum, it can be seen that this implies the three basic responsibilities: counselling (not only at pupil level), consultation with parents and with other members of the school team, and coordination of school and community helping agencies. Basic to the role of the elementary school counsellor is a relationship primarily with adults (parents, teachers, referral agencies) although attention to pupil counselling both individually and in groups is no small part of the total load. It can thus be seen that a critical need in the area counsellor's work is a clear definition of the particular role he is to fill. While it is optimistically expected that a major proportion of time will be spent in constructive efforts, the daily pressures of crisis situations may well find the counsellor with insufficient fingers left to plug the various holes in the dyke, and with little freedom to take any positive steps. And yet, a school quite legitimately asks that the area counsellor be trained to "recognize, understand and work with root causes, not do behavioral patch-up jobs".

3. A Brief History of the Area Counsellor Program.

The area counsellor program had its beginnings in 1948 when the Canadian Mental Health Association together with the University of Toronto brought into being a training program for teachers specially interested in the mental health of school children. Within the next few years eight

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1. George E. Hill and Eleanor Braun Luckey, Guidance for Children in Elementary Schools (Appleton, Century, Crofts. 1969) pp. 136-137.

2. Don Dawson, Senior Coordinator of Counselling, Elementary School Counselling in Vancouver, August 10, 1973.

British Columbia teachers undertook this program and qualified as Mental Health Coordinators. By 1956 the report of the Vancouver Superintendent of Schools in the British Columbia Public Schools Annual Report could mention that "eight elementary schools were served by a mental health coordinator".

In 1955 the first In-Service Mental Health Training Program for counsellors was begun in Vancouver, on the recommendation of a special committee of the School Board. By 1957, as noted in the 1956-57 Annual Report of the Vancouver School Board, thirteen "special counsellors" were at work in Vancouver schools.

Since that time the training program has continued to operate, ordinarily preparing ten specially selected teachers a year, who very soon became known as "special counsellors". Usually one or two of these were from neighboring school districts. At first special counsellors were allocated to secondary schools, with half-time duties in feeder elementary schools. In 1971, on the recommendation of a report by a special committee set up by the School Board, the counsellors were placed full time in elementary schools, (the number being reduced from 25 to 18) and were allocated to specific areas on the basis of the reorganization of school services which has been undertaken. Thus they came to be known as area counsellors, the designation they hold today.

4. <u>The Changing Situation</u>.

It is interesting to note how the situation has changed since the first "Mental Health Coordinators" were appointed. Although Vancouver's elementary school population (Kindergarten - Grade 7 inclusive) increased by about 9% between 1955 and 1974, the number of elementary schools increased by well over 75% (if one includes the present 18 annexes; over 40% if they are excluded). An investigation of the racial origins of Vancouver elementary school children would reveal further startling changes since the immigrant population has increased markedly in the last few years.

While the growth of the system has in itself had an effect on the work of the area counsellors, the rapidly changing world has thrust new and unexpected responsibilities upon them. It is not always easy to comprehend the differences between the world today and the world a short eighteen years ago when the first "Mental Health Coordinator" was appointed. For example: In 1955 Sputnik had not been heard of, television was very much in its ungainly black and white infancy, <u>Lady Chatterley's Lover</u> was yet to be published in England in an unexpurgated edition, automation and computers were largely the stuff of science fiction. It was less than a generation ago; it was another world

When one comes to apply these generalizations to the specific area of counselling, the change becomes even more clearly apparent. A counselling reference more than ten years old often appears to be

ludicrously out of date. In the days when the Canadian Mental Health Association took its first step, counselling in the elementary school was virtually a new idea, today it is widely accepted. Since the 1950's, new insights into child growth and development, new directions in school organization, new ideas about the education of handicapped children have all brought about radical changes. Gone is the self-contained classroom. The segregation of the "problem" child away from the "normal" child is fast going. The cloistered sanctity of the school has been all but breached. Add to these the effects of increasing and bewildering social change -- change to which the child is more vulnerable than the adult -- and it is easy to see reasons for the buffeting which is all too obvious. It becomes increasingly difficult to distinguish "trend" from "fad". Insecurity grows. No wonder elementary school principals put "emotional disturbance" at the top of the list of student problems. If the need for a mental health coordinator existed in 1956, the need for the area counsellor is even more apparent in 1975. Fewer than ten per cent of the Vancouver elementary schools report anything less than satisfaction with the service, and even these few qualify their comment (e.g., "Too seldom around the school to be of any consistent help"). Expressions like "totally satisfied", "indispensable", "very good", "great" are found in answer to the question regarding the extent of satisfaction with area counsellors. "I believe this is a most necessary and potentially effective service", says one principal; services "desperately needed" is a cry from another school. With the burgeoning public interest in the details of the school system and equally heightened demands on the part of the public, the conscientious school principal could sometimes be forgiven for feeling some emotional disturbance himself.

RECOMMENDATION 1. <u>That area counsellor services be maintained</u>.

5. <u>The Area Counsellor's Work Load</u>.

The significance of the words "potentially effective service" quoted above cannot have been missed. At present there are eighteen full-time and one half-time special counsellors (one on leave) serving 93 elementary schools, including annexes. It works out at just over five schools each, closer to four if one omits the annexes, which after all average only about 170 children apiece. At best, however, it means three to five schools with an average pupil load of between 1900 and 2000. Most authorities give from 500 to 1000 as a workable ratio, although there is not always exact agreement about counsellor duties.

While the schools to be served are clustered as conveniently as possible, the organization of the city into areas makes it necessary for the area counsellor in one case to travel a third of the way across the city, while others spend a measurable percentage of time "on the road". One school comments on the time consumed by meetings when the area counsellor is on a screening committee in four separate schools. By far the most limiting factor in the work of the area counsellor, according to most schools, is time. "The limited time per school makes the

area counsellor less valuable", "effectiveness is directly related to the amount of time you can spend with a child", "spread too thinly", "too heavy a load", "needs more time", "no time for this"; the comments come with monotonous frequency.

The area counsellor has a perfect example of an open-ended occupation. Any limits must be essentially arbitrary ones. And schools varying as they do, there is actually no such thing as a typical area counsellor's day. This sample from one area counsellor is not unusual:

8:00 - 9:30 a.m. -- Conferences with principal and teachers.
9:30 - 10:00 a.m. -- Small pupil groups in human relations or whole class groups, teachers present.
10:00 - 10:30 a.m. -- Counselling with small problem-oriented groups (e.g., a group of girls who were "ganging up" on others).
10:30 - 11:30 a.m. -- Individual counselling, children identified from group discussions, or referred by teachers.
11:30 - 12:00 noon -- More group counselling.
Noon hour -- Parent study groups.

The afternoon is a repeat of most of this, at another school. After school there are parent interviews, often including the school principal. Two evenings a week are devoted to home visits so that the whole family can be involved in discussions.

The 1971 School Board Special Committee Report referred to earlier recommended one counsellor per school. Several schools ask for this, though many others would be content to share an area counsellor with one other school. There are arguments for and against having a counsellor a member of one school staff. With reason, schools argue that the counsellor should be "at the spot" when needed, that a resource is of maximum value only when it is in the school, not somewhere else. One fortunate school observes of the counsellor, "Immediate services when need arises". This would naturally come much closer to realization, if fewer schools had to be served. On the other hand there are disadvantages to having a counsellor as a staff member. Schools often point out the value of having an "objective" area counsellor who is recognized as <u>not</u> being a member of the staff. Such a person can better be seen by children as a neutral to whom they can turn when in trouble. If the counsellor is attached to one school, consultative relationships with the staff may not be so easily developed. There is more danger of the counsellor's time being taken up by the many emergent "housekeeping" duties of the school. It is felt, therefore, that apart altogether from considerations of cost, it would be better if the counsellor were not thought of as a member of the staff of one school.

RECOMMENDATION 2. That consideration be given to increasing progressively the number of area counsellors, so that as soon as possible the counsellor load may be reduced from an average of four to five schools to an average of two to three schools. (This visualizes an ultimate upper limit of between thirty and forty area counsellors for an elementary school population comparable to the present one).

At the present time there is virtually no way of covering emergency area counsellor relief. Four schools report being without an area counsellor for the better part of a year. Since school replies have been deliberately kept anonymous, it can only be guessed that this is a reference to a single group of schools where the area counsellor was unavoidably absent for an extended period. The present tight schedule gives no opportunity for relief of any kind, and there are occasions in which an area counsellor, no matter how healthy, finds an unexpected demand simply impossible to accept within a busy schedule.

RECOMMENDATION 3. That for the immediate present one or two "reserve" area counsellors be appointed, for in-service purposes and for relief and substitute capacity in case of illness or other emergency.

6. Setting Priorities for Area Counsellor Responsibilities.

Actually the problem of area counsellor load can also be attacked from three other directions. One has to do with the preparation of area counsellors and will be considered later in this report. A second involves the cooperation of the school staff and other specialists, a detail that will also be dealt with later. A third poses perhaps the most difficult problem of all, since it involves the disadvantages of one of the counsellor's most fundamental good qualities -- the natural desire to help. The best answer would seem to be in a careful delineation of the counsellor's role.

It is usual to find the general responsibilities of the area counsellor set forth in some order of importance, but added to these from time to time are comments from others, including the area counsellors themselves. The result has been something of a consensus on the core of the counsellor's activities but less agreement about the large hazy, ill-defined border around it. When asked to describe their understanding of the over-all objectives of the area counsellor services, schools reveal general agreement. As nearly as possible individual comments have been grouped and set forth in order of frequency of mention, as shown in Table I.

Schools were also asked to give their specific priorities in area counsellor services. The replies, again in order of frequency of mention, are given in Table II. Here too there is wide agreement, although some variations exist.

TABLE I

DESCRIPTION BY ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS OF OVER-ALL OBJECTIVES OF THE AREA COUNSELLOR SERVICES

(ORDER OF IMPORTANCE)

1. Work with children: group and individual counselling.
   - pupil problems: behaviour, adjustment, social-emotional, learning.
   - preventive services
   - diagnostic services
   - support for the school's counselling services, and services "beyond the scope of the school"
   - helping children meet their problems: support for pupils; giving the child "someone to listen to him"; someone to "explain the child's side"; assisting with placement of pupils with special problems.

2. Liaison between school and community.
   - liaison with special helping agencies
   - developing school-community relations
   - coordinating staff efforts with community agencies

3. Liaison between school and home.
   - developing home-school relations; helping parent-teacher cooperation
   - working with parents
   - giving support for parents
   - working individually with problem children and their families

4. Work with the school staff.
   - support and resource for teachers
   - interpreting pupil needs and helping plan for meeting them
   - developing sound interpersonal relations. ("A valued member of the school team")

TABLE II

OPINION OF ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS REGARDING PRIORITIES IN

AREA COUNSELLOR SERVICES

(IN ORDER OF FREQUENCY OF MENTION)

1. Work with parents.
2. Individual counselling with children; helping children with problems.
3. Small group pupil discussions; developing interpersonal relations.
4. Assisting teachers to deal with emotional-behaviour problems.
5. Diagnosis and remedial work with children's learning and social-emotional problems.
6. Liaison with and referral to service agencies.
7. Help in developing teacher skills; counselling teachers.
8. Facilitation of special placement; cutting down follow-up time lag.
9. Work in the Learning Assistance Centre.
10. Miscellaneous, including such things as "attending school conferences on children".

TABLE III

OPINIONS OF ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS REGARDING PRINCIPAL

STUDENT NEEDS TO BE MET BY THE AREA COUNSELLOR SERVICE

(IN ORDER OF FREQUENCY OF MENTION)

1. Ego needs: the development of a suitable self-concept, etc.
2. Emotional problems.
3. A positive adult relationship (with the counsellor).
4. Stimulus to learning.
5. Social skills.
6. Learning how to cope with problems.
7. Behaviour adjustment.
8. Good family relations.
9. Self-direction, constructive motivation, decision making.

The question about principal student needs obviously elicited more detailed replies, posing once more the question of how one counsellor can do all. Replies were phrased in a variety of ways, but an attempt has been made in Table III to group them as before in descending order of frequency of mention.

Using a number of statements and comments, a preliminary analysis was made of area counsellor services, reducing them to 37 individual items. Although not all of these were considered by this writer to be properly included in the responsibilities of area counsellors, they were presented to schools uncritically for consideration. Every item was seen by at least some schools as being properly a part of the service. Some items were ruled out as not so being, but there was anything but agreement on which ones should be omitted. Sometimes a service considered inappropriate by some was specially requested by others -- but perhaps this was just a cry for help, the service being needed, no matter who provided it!

Items were arranged in order according to the degree to which schools felt their needs were best served. Table IV shows the first fifteen services so reported. Some services that might be considered of some importance are not found in this list.

Table V gives the ten services that received the lowest such ratings. Obviously some of these are so listed either because they are not needed or because the school does not feel this is part of the area counsellor's role. Indeed, as has been mentioned, in a number of cases schools plainly said, "not his responsibility". (It must be accepted too, that the changing educational scene has meant that "needs" tend to come and go. Drug education is a good example). However, the fact remains that all these have at one time been considered as part of the area counsellor's responsibility, and in fact in all cases some schools are so considering them.

There is probably no special value in pursuing this analysis. There are three conclusions to be drawn from it, however: there is some uncertainty as to the limits of the area counsellor's responsibility; not all schools can be expected to agree exactly on what these limits are; clearer direction needs to be provided in order that proper priorities can be set.

RECOMMENDATION 4. <u>That the function of the area counsellor be carefully defined by the Vancouver School Board as an explicit set of priorities, but in general terms</u>.

In addition, it seems important to recognize that special abilities of individual counsellors be given some consideration, and used to the maximum. One counsellor has been quoted as saying, "I'm trying on my many hats, to find out which is the most comfortable". It is all too easy to fall into the error of seeing the counsellor as a jack-of-all-trades.

TABLE IV

AREA COUNSELLOR ACTIVITIES CONSIDERED BY SCHOOLS

AS BEST MEETING SCHOOL NEEDS

(IN RANK ORDER)

1. Consults with individual teachers.
2. Confers with parents.
3. Advises on student referrals to specialized agencies.
4. Works in close cooperation with the Public Health Nurse.
5. Acts essentially as an elementary school counsellor.
6. Advises individual teachers.
7. Facilitates student referrals.
8. Acts as liaison with referral agencies.
9. Is an active and useful member of the school-based team.
10. Helps identify and assess behavioural disabilities.
11. Provides a liaison with community resource personnel.
12. Counsels individual students.
13. Helps correct behavioural disabilities.
14. Acts on the Screening Committee for the Learning Assistance Centre.
15. Helps identify and assess learning disabilities.

TABLE V

AREA COUNSELLOR ACTIVITIES CONSIDERED BY SCHOOLS

AS LEAST MEETING SCHOOL NEEDS

1. Holds discussions with teacher groups.
2. Assists the Learning Assistance Centre.
3. Advises and assists with the Family Life Education Program.
4. Specifically assists with relations between older and younger students.
5. Assists with the in-service teacher training program.
6. Assists in recruiting volunteers to help with the Learning Assistance Centre.
7. Advises and assists with the school drug education program.
8. Assists in course planning (counselling for transfer to secondary school).
9. Utilizes services of appropriate teacher aides.
10. Engages in remedial teaching.

RECOMMENDATION 5. That in applying these, some allowance be made for the area counsellor's individual priorities as a result of special ability, interest and experience.

7. Setting Local Priorities.

What may the area counsellor expect to meet when assigned to a particular school? The question is almost unanswerable. Schools vary as to size, administration, staffing, physical facilities, as well as the most critical variable of all, the character of the district and the student population. An outstanding example is the community school where, as one principal pointed out, after-school hours are made accessible to the area counsellor for parent conferences and other activities. No one school or district has a monopoly on child problems, either. School respondents have been quick to point out that pupils of superior ability or privileged home environment are nonetheless a prey to problems peculiar to themselves.

For practical purposes, therefore, it is important to consider first the "personality" of the school, then the objectives of the school administration and finally both the special abilities and the objectives of the area counsellor. And this needs to be done as early in the year as possible. As the weeks unfold there will be plenty of demands, most of them justifiable. Frequently parents and students will either hinder the learning process by their apathy or complicate it by undue pressures. Even normal families will suffer tensions over disagreements regarding their children's school progress. Indeed it is difficult to visualize the "normal" family in a day when families are more and more subject to such aggravations as increased mobility, increasing urbanization, disjointed homes, or crippled ones as a result of two parents working. [1]

It will help immensely if, before the onset of such pressures, local priorities are set. Questions like these need answers: To what extent have the school staff been tempted to hand over to the area counsellor responsibilities which should be their own? What are the implications for the area counsellor in being considered a member of the school team?

A number of "options" have been put before the area counsellor, and rightly so, since needs and opportunities come and go. One of these involves Family Life Education. To what degree is the area counsellor responsible for setting up and continuing such a program? It would seem reasonable that the area counsellor enlist the cooperation of members of the staff, and assume some responsibility for initiating the program and supervising its progress. Should the area counsellor, however, be expected to carry the whole weight?

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1. One sometimes wonders how much the modern working mother has been "liberated". In an earlier generation she had time to be the more-or-less benign matriarch of her own household.

With a constructive interest in being what Anna Meeks [1] calls a "child development consultant", the area counsellor may introduce any number of "guidance games", such as the DUSO kit. As before, should such activities not be thought of primarily as a demonstration for teachers rather than a continuing area counsellor assignment? One school rightly notes that staff changes necessitate the area counsellor's continually reviewing old ground -- surely enough of an ongoing responsibility!

The student counselling process itself can be nudged in the direction of becoming "self-destructing". As one teacher points out, rather than establishing oneself as a permanent problem-solver, the good counsellor aims at encouraging children to find their own solutions. Indeed, as another has said, the real mandate for counsellors is to make themselves dispensable.

School reports were noticeably scarce of comment on the effect of the area counsellor on improved relations between senior and junior students, yet one school reported how an after-school gym club for Grades 3 and 4 had been organized by Grade 7 girls. In another school (not in Vancouver), a notably rowdy group of Grade 6 boys had been enlisted to act as "big brothers" to a Grade 2 class -- with astounding results. In instances like these one can see the influence of such a person as an area counsellor, as someone with helpful insights and practical suggestions for consideration by other members of the team. The point to be kept in mind is that the area counsellor is there to give ideas, not to assume entire responsibility.

In this connection some reference should be made to "discipline". In the absence of a report by a special committee studying the matter, it would be presumptuous to comment fully here. However, area counsellors are often called on to help teachers in classroom crises. One area counsellor mentioned the need for the counsellor to be able to pass on "short term management skills". Increased permissiveness, together with the tendency referred to elsewhere to retain the "difficult" child in the regular school, have put many classroom teachers in mental if not physical jeopardy. There is an abundance of practical material available in books like those of Thomas Gordon or Haim Ginott. There are behavior modification techniques such as those proposed by J.D. Krumboltz ("A counsellor's success is judged by the degree to which he can help pupils engage in more appropriate types of behavior" 2). [3]

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1. Dr. Anna R. Meeks, of the State Department of Education, Baltimore, Maryland, has done several studies in elementary school counselling for the American Personnel and Guidance Association.

2. Quoted in Hill and Lucky, op. cit. P. 230

3. Refer also to "Discipline, a Bibliography", available from the British Columbia Teachers' Federation Resource Centre.

But once again are these techniques primarily for the area counsellor to use, or to be passed on in discussions with teachers?

Incidentally, one school report makes the constructive suggestion that "non-instructional days" give excellent opportunity for area counsellor meetings with the staff.

What limits should be set on counselling adults? Rudolf Dreikurs in speaking of Alfred Adler [1] said, "He realized that if parents fail to influence the child properly, the parents need education, not therapy". There is place for active understanding and support of parents and co-operation with them, but how far should the area counsellor be concerned? This question will be returned to later in this report.

To what extent (if any) should in-school problems be set aside in favour of their out-of-school components? For example how far towards being a social worker should the area counsellor go?

An instance of unanticipated addition to demands on the school is the influx of new Canadians, particularly in some districts. Where neither parent speaks English handily, the area counsellor suddenly discovers the necessity of being an interpreter, if liaison is to be established. While it is not the purpose of this review to consider Learning Assistance Centres, it must be added that they have in some instances been almost flooded out by non-English-speaking children. It is encouraging to know that some thought is being given to setting up a special agency to deal with this matter and so provide some relief for the area counsellor and the learning assistance teacher.

RECOMMENDATION 6. That the elementary school principal, staff and area counsellor be encouraged to work together in developing a specific set of priorities in keeping with the special needs of the school, and guided by the general priorities as developed centrally.

The setting of specific local priorities has both a positive and a negative objective. To put the negative one as positively as possible, the local priorities should be set out in such a way as to help free the area counsellor to exercise any special abilities, such as, for example, helping teachers develop constructive group activities with children.

RECOMMENDATION 7. That in these, care be taken to ensure that the area counsellor is enabled to put to maximum use any special abilities and training.

8. The Area Counsellor as a Useful Team Member.

One of the more frequently mentioned handicaps to satisfaction of area counsellor service is lack of "continuous attention by the area

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1. From the introduction to Alfred Adler, The Education of Children. Chicago; Henry Regnery Co., 1970.

counsellor". Some years ago when the British Columbia Department of Education was putting down very basic requirements for school counsellors, it included the suggestion that the teacher have at least a year's opportunity to get to know the school and its neighborhood before doing any counselling. While the idea is not totally applicable to the work of the area counsellor, the thought behind the suggestion is. An understanding school principal acknowledged that the area counsellor should be expected to use an individual approach, "but as soon as we get used to one point of view and method of operating, we are asked to switch to another". Some continuity of effort is essential. "Placement" is considered as one of the area counsellor's functions. Corollary to this is the necessity for follow-up. This kind of longitudinal responsibility becomes futile when one is on only a short-term assignment.

RECOMMENDATION 8. <u>That every effort continue to be made to achieve continuity of service to each school by having the area counsellor work with it for two or three years at least</u>.

Much has been made of the added responsibilities the modern world has given the school counsellor. It must also be recognized that much more assistance is now available, both within the school and outside it. In proportion the need grows to find the best method of coordinating these various services. Since the area counsellor is thought of as a coordinator this may very well (though not necessarily) be labelled an area counsellor responsibility. However it is managed, there is both a danger and an advantage in the inevitable overlapping of functions of the various specialist school personnel. Each team member has a unique contribution to make. As a team they should be able to link up their activities; they should be careful not to double them up.

It would be well, then, for the school to examine these specialist functions critically, to see when, where and how much any overlapping is justified, and to ensure that the functions are distinct enough to be practical. The most recent additions to the team are the school psychologist and the learning assistance teacher, following the May 1971 Special Committee Report referred to earlier. The role of the psychologist lies primarily in identification and diagnosis of severe learning and behavioral disorders, through appropriate testing and other measures, and (in conjunction with other members of the team) recommendation for remedial measures. The learning assistance teacher helps supply resources for remedying learning deficiencies, providing the school with flexible referral services and eliminating the need for complete segregation of children with problems. Most schools have accepted these additional specialists as key figures on the school team, but there are still some signs that roles are being confused. Some schools, for example, wish to involve the area counsellor in testing, or in remedial teaching. The area counsellor's role is an essential one in relation to both these, often beginning where the psychologist leaves off, and ensuring suitable referral and follow-up, particularly in connection with the learning assistance centre.

The area counsellor's role is a social-personal one. Much emotional disturbance results from attempting to cope with an insoluble learning problem. Even after the child's handicap is diagnosed there are still the variables of personality, school environment, and human relationships to be considered. Understanding and support -- by the area counsellor -- are a vital component of the remedial processes. A further important function is in interpreting and explaining to parents. In many instances the child's school problems are aggravated by the natural anxieties of the parents. A sensible responsibility that can be assumed by the area counsellor is the giving of encouragement and support in cases like these.

It should be relatively simple to delineate the team responsibilities of other team members -- the principal, vice-principal, teachers concerned, school nurse and so on. Who chairs the school team is surely a matter for the individual school to decide, and it is not the place of this report to go into details about the role of each team member. The team function of the area counsellor needs to be made clear, however, considering that within this responsibility lie such things as gathering of information, coordination of services, interpretations and understandings, and finally facilitation. A school principal comments that it is useful to work out a schedule that will bring area counsellor, psychologist and nurse together at the school at stated times so as to simplify consultation arrangements. Another implies similar sensible planning in commenting that his counsellor "eliminates delays". There has often been heated academic discussion about the school counsellor's role as an "agent of change". It would not be stretching credibility too far to see the area counsellor, with acceptable school team relations, as an agent of change for the whole school, enjoying the advantages of being able to take a suitably objective point of view.

RECOMMENDATION 9. That the elementary school examine carefully the duties of the area counsellor with respect to those of other specialists such as the school nurse, the psychologist, the learning assistance teacher and others, so as to keep wasteful overlapping of responsibilities to a minimum and ensure that each specialist complements the work of the others to the fullest extent.

9. Utilizing Area Counsellor Services to the Full.

Reference has already been made to the matter of varying interests and abilities of area counsellors, a detail that will be considered again in connection with the training program. Within the limitations of supply, it is clear that an attempt has been made to place personnel in situations most in need of the peculiar abilities each possesses. Parent problems in one area, for example, may be chiefly those of broken, disorganized, delinquent homes. In another area the school principal characterizes his main parent problem this way: "There's a PhD. in every other house on the street, and all of them think they know better than I do how to operate the school". There is nothing new about this

kind of comment; it does provide an example of the different kinds of situation that can exist from school to school, and it does suggest that different approaches are often required.

RECOMMENDATION 10. That special attention continue to be paid to the placing of area counsellors in assignments where their particular abilities can be used to the fullest. That provision be made for transferring an area counsellor if, following an initial appointment, the area counsellor, the principal, or staff, do not find the situation as productive as it should be.

Where an area counsellor has had particular success in a school, for example in demonstrating to teachers a certain group counselling technique, it seems a pity that the resources cannot be used, for short periods at least, in other schools. Under a different type of organization and a different assignment of responsibilities there could be a "peripatetic counsellor", as in fact there is in Vancouver, in one instance at least. It should be possible to take some advantage of this idea, however, while retaining the present over-all role of the counsellor as being attached to one area.

RECOMMENDATION 11. That consideration be given to the possibility of exchange of area counsellors for short periods of time, so that a special ability can be made available to more than one area.

It is clear from one school reply that a school may be disenchanted with the idea of area counsellors. This can be attributed to a number of possible causes: the lack of continuity of service already referred to, the fact that a suitable working arrangement has not yet had a chance to develop, a natural human conflict of philosophies and objectives on the part of principal and area counsellor, for which a satisfactory compromise has not yet been worked out. While there may be some question as to whether a senior clerk or a truant officer, or a "school liaison officer for delinquents" would be a complete solution, such an answer as "minimal", or "totally inadequate" to the question "chief value of area counsellor services to your school" deserves some attention, most probably a careful examination of reasons why a service so universally praised is not working in one instance. While this writer does not believe there exists a suitable alternative to the program at the present time, it could possibly be of value to put it to a practical test.

RECOMMENDATION 12. That senior officials consider developing a carefully controlled experiment whereby a school that does not find itself in agreement with the program of area counsellor services be allowed to try replacing its area counsellor by other specialist staff.

10. Area Counsellor Working Facilities.

Discussion with area counsellors reveals that they are the last people in the system to see themselves as occupants of prestigious offices. Invariably they are too much on the move to worry much about more than a place to hang a coat. Perhaps they have not been insistent enough about suitable work space. In any case, the school enquiry revealed that virtually every part of the school may be used by the area counsellor for interviews. Sometimes the principal himself surrenders his office, and in at least one instance you can find a men's washroom doubling as an area counsellor's workroom. Only about 45% of the school principals report work space as being adequate. Needs most frequently listed are: privacy, room for small group interviews, a telephone, work space including a file drawer capable of being locked. Several schools mentioned that hoped-for building improvements would provide such facilities. Some practical suggestions were received: a little-used section of hallway could be partitioned off; there is space for a small conference room in the school basement; an unused classroom could be adapted. These seem to be reasonable requests and suggestions.

RECOMMENDATION 13. That practical steps be taken to provide suitable working facilities for the area counsellor, in particular a small conference room (or rooms), a telephone, and adequate furnishings, such as a desk and file drawer capable of being locked. Such facilities could enjoy a manifold use by various other auxiliary personnel.

Record keeping apparently does not enjoy any uniformity, in regard to minutes of school screening committee sessions, case conferences, or area counsellor notes. Reluctance to keep specific written comments on student disability or misbehaviour can be readily understood; the dangers have often enough been cited. In addition, it is agreed that record keeping procedures can often be time wasting and unproductive. In order to regularize record keeping and at the same time prevent it from becoming an unfruitful burden, some standardization might well be introduced.

RECOMMENDATION 14. That a simple area-counsellor record-keeping system be devised so that records may be easily transferred from school to school, care being taken to avoid unnecessary detail and to continue to respect confidentiality of information.

11. The Area Counsellor and the Community.

A most important part of the area counsellor's contribution to the school is in identifying community resource agencies, establishing contact with them and developing a working referral system. This is not an easy task, largely because it involves a rapidly changing and developing pattern of social agencies.

For some years it has been recognized that there was a need in Vancouver to integrate the services of the many individuals and groups interested in human welfare. One "average" area in the city has no fewer than 28 agencies that could be of assistance to the school. The development in the past few years of a system of government grants for local projects has complicated the picture by introducing programs which are often experimental, and whether or not beneficial are frequently transitory. It is hoped that the introduction of Community Resource Boards, in itself a developing concept, will go a long way towards resolving this difficulty.

It is not the purpose of this study to examine projects under the care of the Department of Human Resources. At the same time it is felt that schools should be sure they do not neglect the advantages presented. The area counsellor is the logical link. School walls today are rapidly crumbling. Personnel from outside the school are found often enough in places to which a few years ago a teacher's certificate was virtually the only key. The development is a fascinating one looking ahead to changes in educational organization and administration that it is not the function of this study to examine. Now is the time that secure foundations must be laid, however, if the school is to enjoy to the fullest degree the developing resources of the community.

RECOMMENDATION 15. <u>That every effort be made to build a firm liaison between the area counsellor and the developing local Resource Boards, in order to facilitate the linkage between the school and the community resources</u>.

It was not expected that teachers would always be able to complete fully all sections of the school questionnaire. If one can judge by returns, however, many elementary school teachers are not well enough acquainted with area counsellor services to make use of them to the extent they should. As one teacher puts it, "We are not made sufficiently aware of the work done behind the scenes". It is even less surprising to find that the community at large has no clear understanding of the services. Parents contacted almost uniformly related "counselling" to the secondary schools, and frequently described them in terms of things like vocational guidance, certainly not a priority at the elementary level.

The recommended discussion referred to earlier regarding the school's counselling priorities which should take place early in the year, could provide a perfect platform for a question-and-answer session with the school staff. When the area counsellor has time (schools often said "none available") to get to know teachers and pupils in a classroom setting, relationships can be further strengthened.

There is no reason why the School Board's public relations program cannot at times highlight the service. There has been noticeably scant mention of it in recent School Board Annual Reports. Only as those involved in the elementary school program -- parents and teachers alike -- are aware of "what it's all about" will the program begin fully to realize its potential value. Updating of memoranda, particularly where evolving

programs are concerned, is a familiar continuing task. As in other instances area counsellor services could well use such a device as a springboard for further publicity. [1]

RECOMMENDATION 16. That a vigorous campaign be conducted to publicize the area counsellor services, not only in the community at large, but among the elementary school teaching staff.

12. Putting the Area Counsellor in Perspective.

As has been pointed out earlier, the concept of elementary school counsellor has been becoming increasingly accepted in recent years. No doubt there has been no deliberate intention of masquerading the services, but neither "Mental Health Coordinator", nor "Special Counsellor" clearly described the work of the person concerned. "Area Counsellor" has no doubt an administrative significance, but means little if anything to the rest of the community. "Consultant" sounds good, and so does "Coordinator", but neither of these designations gives full value to the counsellor's work. The time has come to give the spade its rightful working name.

RECOMMENDATION 17. That the properly descriptive name, "elementary school counsellor" be adopted in place of "area counsellor".

Almost a hundred years ago, Robert Louis Stevenson had a "happy thought" -- a term not unknown in elementary school circles. That's what he titled the short, often-quoted poem contained in his Child's Garden of Verses:

> The world is so full of a number of things,
> I'm sure we should all be as happy as kings.

Most of the kings have gone, and the world is fuller than ever of "things". A cynic could enjoy a bitter romp with the word "happy". It will take the cooperative efforts of all men of good will to make certain that the child's world of "things" can be something to treasure rather than something to fear. In pursuing a fully constructive role, the elementary school counsellor will be able to play an important part in putting that world in its right perspective.

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1. For example, the "Area Counsellor-Duties and Functions" section of the VSB Policies and Procedures for Principals might be profitable revised.

13. The A[illegible]unsellor Training Program.

[illegible]n that it is the only substantial in-service training program we have". [illegible]is the view of one Vancouver School Board official. It is amplified by abundant testimonials from those who have taken the Program or who have been identified with it: "the most valuable training experience I have encountered", "most enriching year in my life", "the best education I have had, including study for my Master's degree", "the growth in professionalism which took place over the year among my colleagues was an excellent way to evaluate the invaluable worth of the program". Of those contacted only two (both school principals) were at all doubtful as to its value. The remainder of those approached gave virtually unqualified support. Any criticisms lay in the area of suggested additions or improvements.

The training program is essentially practical in that it aims at developing an experiential knowledge of group processes, providing refresher information on current developments in the behavioral and social sciences, and furnishing a face-to-face acquaintanceship with the more than fifty Vancouver service agencies to which the school can refer. Expected outcomes include not only professional growth but increased maturity and broadened attitudes.

Certainly, with the peculiar combination of abilities and skills called for in the work of the area counsellor, it would be difficult to find a preparation program with the same kind of practicality and flexibility, impossible to visualize the area counsellor services continuing without it.

RECOMMENDATION 18. That the training program be maintained and developed.

14. Selection of Trainees.

One of the strengths of the program springs from the limitation of the class normally to ten or eleven members. This makes much more feasible the program aims — development of a group atmosphere, free discussion, and so on. In spite of the small numbers each year, it is recognized that not all will find it possible or desirable to become area counsellors. Nevertheless, it seems a pity that people should be admitted to the program who obviously do not intend to become area counsellors. Table VI will show how the disposition of graduates of the program has changed during its lifetime and Table VII will give some statistics. It will be seen that of recent years a much smaller proportion of graduates have planned to enter administration. The In-Service Training Report for 1962, the seventh year, gave just under half of the total graduates as being in supervisory or administrative positions; the report for 1967, the twelfth year, showed an increase to just over half. A good deal of this could come about as a result of normal advancement policies. However, the changing direction of program graduates is shown by the fact that while just over 28% of the total number completing it have become public school principals or vice-principals (first four categories of Table VI), during the first ten years of the program the figure was over 48%, as compared with less than 12% during the last nine years.

In any case none of this at all represents a waste of effort, for the school with the principal, vice-principal, learning assistance teacher or other personnel who have taken the program unquestionably benefits -- or if it does not, suitable steps should surely be taken to put matters right.

TABLE VI -- DISPOSITION OF MEMBERS OF AREA COUNSELLOR TRAINING PROGRAM

	1955-6	1956-7	1957-8	1958-9	1959-60	1960-1	1961-2	1962-3	1963-4	1964-5	1965-6	1966-7	1967-8	1968-9	1969-70	1970-1	1971-2	1972-3	1973-4	TOTAL
Principal, Sec. School	2	2	1		1			1								1				8
Principal Elem. School	3		3	4	4	4	5	3	3	2	3	1			2					37
Vice-Pr. Sec. School		1						1		1		1		1						5
Vice-Pr. Elem. School				1	1					1			1	1						5
Area (Spec.) Counsellor	1	1	2	1		2	4	4	1	1	5	6	5	4	2	4	1		4	48
Sec. School Counsellor													3	3	3	2	3	4	2	20
Elem. School Counsellor																		1		1
Learning Asst. Centre Teacher																1		2	1	4
College & University	1					1			1			1			1					5
Sup. Spec. Education		1	1	1			1													4
Counselling Coordinator		1																		1
Supervisory		2	1			1			2			1			1		1			9
Teacher				3	3	2		1	1	3	1		2	2	1	2	4	2	2	29
(Resigned)							1													(1)
(Retired)		1	2	2		1		1		1	2	1	3							(14)
Not in Pub. Sch. System					1				1	1	2	1		1						7
(Deceased)	2	2	1				2		1	2										(10)
TOTAL	7	8	8	10	10	10	10	10	9	9	11	11	11	12	10	10	9	9	9	183

TABLE VII

ADDITIONAL TRAINING PROGRAM FIGURES

Total number of graduates to date	-	193	
Present Vancouver area counsellors	-	20	(one on leave)
Number at sometime holding an area counsellor position in Vancouver, but since transferred, retired, etc.	-	34	
Formerly or at present counsellors in Vancouver schools	-	28	(at least)
Formerly or at present special counsellors in other districts	-	23	
Formerly or at present secondary school counsellors in other districts	-	8	
		113	(59%)

From the past five years of the Program --

Formerly or at present counselling	-	32	(67%)
Now Learning Assistance Teachers	-	7	
Other	-	9	

It may be noted that whereas approximately one quarter of the total graduates became area counsellors (or the equivalent), in the first ten years there were just under one fifth as compared to just over one third in the last nine years.

It will also be seen that during the last four years, four graduates have become learning assistance teachers. This is no doubt justified under the circumstances of the past few years. However, in consideration of the small size of the group, it does seem desirable to give first refusal to those who seriously hope to become area counsellors. Mention can be made here of the possible effect of this on the content of the program itself; the implications will appear later.

Enough has already been said about the personality and interests of candidates for the training program to make much further comment unnecessary. Gilbert Wrenn somewhere puts it succinctly, stating that the trainee should have "favorable qualities of being as well as technical competence".

Due regard has evidently been given to the change in emphasis that occurred when the "special counsellor", working out of a secondary school, became an "area counsellor" located in an elementary school. While it would be unwise to insist that all those entering the program should have elementary school teaching experience, it is certainly important that this emphasis be given every priority. Needless to say, some experience in counselling should also be a factor of considerable weight. This writer can envisage the possibility of finding a suitable applicant who has had no teaching experience at all, but that does not mean that such unusual personnel will be or should be found frequently. A school observes, "Theory must be backed up by experience". Apart from anything else, a teacher entering this program should be able to demonstrate from experience an ability to establish a ready rapport with children of elementary school age.

Since the area counsellor must work closely with teachers, another priority might well be a demonstrated ability to relate well to them, particularly in these days of emphasis upon collegiality.

And one other comment from a respondent echoes a matter referred to earlier in urging that the potential area counsellor "have the courage to say 'No'"!

RECOMMENDATION 19. <u>That every care continue to be taken in the selection of personnel for the program, bearing in mind that personality factors far outweigh the advantages of training. That elementary school staffs and principals be urged to nominate teachers for the program</u>.

15. <u>Development of Program Content</u>.

Much thought has already been given to establishing an organic connection between the training program and the University of British Columbia (Simon Fraser University is not at present prepared to offer a program for elementary school counsellors but may be ready to do so in a year or two). The arguments for preserving the character of the training program, including its field-orientation, its flexibility and adaptability to the changing needs of the Vancouver School System are incontrovertible. However, this should not rule out the possibility of a partnership with the University, which, it is understood, is ready to make one or two instructors available to work within the school system.

Some form of extension of the program can be envisaged, either in the form of a pre- or post-training year, which might go some way towards correcting the comment by the late Dr. Samuel Laycock that it is "too shallow". On the other hand the distinctive values must be retained at all costs -- the advantages, for instance, of talking to someone actually "out in the community, getting their feet wet, rather than talking from a theoretical and ivory tower position", as reported by one respondent.

RECOMMENDATION 20. That the Vancouver School Board approach the University of British Columbia with the aim of integrating suitable university studies with the area counsellor training program, and that the University be asked to set up a diploma or a post-graduate education program which would include suitable recognition of the area counsellor training program.

Without an intimate knowledge of the details of the program (say, having taken it oneself), one is on rather shaky ground in attempting a detailed comment on it. It is and has been continuously adjustable; it has largely accommodated itself to a change in emphasis, so that it is now completely concerned with elementary school details. It has wisely continued to use the experience of former graduates of the program in a critically evaluative capacity. Emphases have changed over the years, even in places where the topical outline has remained the same. There is considerable difference of opinion when it comes to suggesting changes. One charges that it lacks a uniformity of approach, another praises its diversification. One finds that a knowledge of referrals is more important than skill in counselling; another contends that "exposure to referral agencies" can be overdone. Doubtless, with the variety of background and interests involved, a complete consensus will never be possible. Some points stand out, however: With the emphasis on meeting adults -- parents and teachers -- area counsellors might well be given some introduction to adult counselling. The agency familiarization section of the program, while consistently praised, has some weaknesses that will certainly not be unknown to those in charge. The "practicum" section of the preparation program will be dealt with later.

Perhaps consideration could be given to curtailing some of the field experiences, deepening the involvement in others, possible allowing some room for selection according to individual interest. The planner finds himself in a familiar quandary when he discovers that the best informed authority is not necessarily the most successful at presentation. This is a vexed problem: perhaps some attack could be made on it through the use of such an alternative as a printed presentation, or even a tape-recorded one. In any case, a suggestion made by more than one graduate of the program is that the proportion of lecture time could be profitably reduced, to make room for a greater amount of practical experience. An instance of the need to discriminate between the functions of the area counsellor and the school psychologist is suggested by the criticism made by the Vancouver Association for Children with Learning Disabilities, that the area counsellor is not sufficiently trained in recognizing such

learning disabilities as those springing from neuro-physiological disorders. While there would not seem to be much question as to whose primary responsibility this is, there is some argument for giving the area counsellor some acquaintance with it. It is of interest to know that the University of Victoria has become recognized as one of the leading centres in Western Canada in this field, and would undoubtedly be interested in giving assistance.

RECOMMENDATION 21. That encouragement be given to the commendable efforts towards continuing revision and adjustment of the program. That a section on adult counselling be added.

Reference has already been made to the good services rendered the training program by its past graduates. At the risk of adding one more item to their already full schedule, it is felt that perhaps a more systematic use might be made of them, particularly in specific discussion of aspects of their responsibilities and concomitant problems. It is recognized that some of this is already being done.

RECOMMENDATION 22. That efforts be continued towards utilizing the experience of practising area counsellors both for program revision and for discussion purposes within the program.

Within the compass of such a relatively brief and concentrated program, with so small a group of trainees, it is difficult to see much opportunity for guided exploration of individual interests. Indeed, one reason for not accepting the suggestion made by several people, that the program occupy a full day and be shortened to half a year, would be that the longer duration of the program as at present does give more time for pursuit of individual interests. More than one graduate of the program has mentioned that a greater amount of collateral reading had been done than was the case with much heavier university courses. (Perhaps because it was not required!). It may be that this writer is projecting his own undisciplined reading habits which require an agency to bring nose and grindstone together. It does seem, however, that room might be found for encouraging individual trainees to take the opportunity of exploring a specific interest and leading a group discussion of it. It is noted that the training program enjoys the use of a good library, which will naturally be being kept reasonably up to date.

RECOMMENDATION 23. That wherever possible opportunity be provided for the guided development of the individual interests, background and personality factors of those enrolled in the program.

16. The Practicum.

The practicum in area counsellor training is still undergoing considerable development. Perhaps its most obvious need at present is for greater specific direction, expanded opportunity, and more planned critical use. The "micro-teaching" concept readily applies itself here. A purposeful effort to relate the regular morning teaching activities to the training program is being made and could well be developed. "Familiarization" sessions, already being provided, might at least sometimes place the counsellor-in-training in an "assistant" position, rather than simply as an onlooker or listener. A good deal of this becomes more feasible as the area counsellor finds the time limitation (referred to earlier) given some relief.

At present those in the program enjoy a two-week continuous practicum later in their year. As far as possible it would be of value to consider this as an experience as an area counsellor rather than as an "assistant" area counsellor. Details are of course subject to the usual exigencies of circumstance. This suggestion is prompted by the fact that the area counsellor will in most cases meet a situation that is quite new -- not officially attached to a school staff, yet constrained to work in close cooperation with it. Inclusion in the program of a birds-eye view of school administration is recommended in one suggestion. While this may be a little beyond its normal scope, the idea is sound. The professional relationships of the area counsellor need conscious attention.

There is one imponderable that has a bearing on the idea of the "independent" practicum. It is implicit in the term "status". With reference to school counsellors in general, this is a vague concept about which there is little agreement. At one time it was fashionable to look upon the counsellor as one who has smoothly extricated himself from ordinary classroom responsibilities. It is doubtful whether anyone acquainted with the work of the area counsellor would make that judgement today. One sometimes runs across the opinion that the amount and kind of preparation can help bestow the needed "status". While preparation is undoubtedly an ingredient, status is not something that can be put on as easily as a new suit of clothes. The training program can and does help bring out the innate qualities that are the substance from which status derives. Since eventually status is something to be earned, it would be well to provide the novice area counsellor with an opportunity for practical experience in what it is all about. This is a detail that will be referred to later.

RECOMMENDATION 24. That the practicum be continued and expanded. That careful direction be given to ensure maximum use of the experience, including suitable follow-up discussion. That as far as possible regular school responsibilities in the mornings be arranged to articulate with the training sessions in the afternoons.

As an incentive to planned and directed experience, and detailed analysis for discussion, there are a number of modern technical aids that can be considered.

RECOMMENDATION 25. That video-tapes of practicum activities be considered for later analysis and discussion by the group as a whole.

17. Keeping Up to Date.

The fluidity of the modern world in general, the educational world in particular, and the consequent changing emphases and developing techniques demand constant adaptability. In some instances (the lunatic fringe of the human potential movement is an example) untested methods and runaway enthusiasms call for thoughtful consideration of whether one is riding the wave of the future or enjoying going around with the eddy of a backwater. Counselling has been known to pick up some strange psychiatric companions, and no doubt there are others on their way. It is difficult amid the press of current business to be always aware of these movements. It is equally desirable to be in a position to make intelligent use of those that are demonstrating their utility.

RECOMMENDATION 26. That provision be made for brief refresher courses for area counsellors, in order to maintain contact with new developments.

18. Final Word.

Reference has already been made to the demands facing the "counsellor in action". The moment of truth does not necessarily arrive until after the support given by study companion and training supervisor is withdrawn. One respondent suggests that there should be a year's delay between the ending of the program and the commencement of active involvement as an area counsellor. Although the reasoning behind this has something to commend it, the resulting time lag could pinch the supply to too great an extent. Consistent with what has already been said, there seems to be a need for sensible adjustment, if the potential area counsellor finds it difficult to function under the unexpected demands of this particular situation.

RECOMMENDATION 27. That consideration be given to assessing the potential of members of the training program through provision of a conditional appointment or probationary year.

An earlier recommendation suggested that the name "area counsellor" be changed. Similarly, it would seem that "training program" is not an entirely apt designation for this activity. As a number of people have said, "training" by no means covers all the program includes, and in some contexts at least is not suitable to any of it. The problem lies in

finding a more suitable description. Arbitrary as it may sound, "qualifying" is perhaps the best alternative.

RECOMMENDATION 28. That since "training" does not adequately describe the program, thought be given to substituting such a term as "familiarization", "preparation", "specialist", or "qualifying".

At least four out of the eight of the Vancouver School Board's "Educational Goals for the 70's" involve such activities as those engaged in by area counsellors. Implicit in considering "goals" and "directions", and underlying the purpose in making such a statement is the idea that adequate planning is essential. It would be difficult to find a more fitting example of purposeful planning than in this flexible, evolving, self-evaluating program of preparation for such essential services to schools as those of the area counsellors.

> From an article in the April 1975 Phi Delta Kappan by Gerald J. Pine, a well known critic of school counselling --
>
> Rather than remain bound by one or more traditional strategies, counsellors are integrating, organizing, and systematically exploring a variety of alternatives for working with people . . . School counselling is mapping out a new future, drawing from a broad repertoire of strategies: values clarification, human development training, peer counselling, family counselling and education, organizational development, psycho- and socio-ecology, and community development. What the future holds is difficult to determine, but it is clear that the profession is responding to the challenge to prove its value.

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

Area Counsellor Services.

1. That area counsellor services be maintained.

2. That consideration be given to increasing progressively the number of area counsellors, so that as soon as possible the counsellor load may be reduced from an average of four to five schools to an average of two to three schools. (This visualizes an ultimate upper limit of between thirty and forty area counsellors for an elementary school population comparable to the present one).

3. That for the immediate present one or two "reserve" area counsellors be appointed, for in-service purposes and for relief and substitute capacity in case of illness or other emergency.

4. That the function of the area counsellor be carefully defined by the Vancouver School Board as an explicit set of priorities, but in general terms.

5. That in applying these, some allowance be made for the area counsellor's individual priorities as a result of special ability, interest and experience.

6. That the elementary school principal, staff and area counsellor be encouraged to work together in developing a specific set of priorities in keeping with the special needs of the school, and guided by the general priorities as developed centrally.

7. That in these, care be taken to ensure that the area counsellor is enabled to put to maximum use any special abilities and training.

8. That every effort continue to be made to achieve continuity of service to each school by having the area counsellor work with it for two or three years at least.

9. That the elementary school examine carefully the duties of the area counsellor with respect to those of other specialists such as the school nurse, the psychologist, the learning assistance teacher and others, so as to keep wasteful overlapping of responsibilities to a minimum and ensure that each specialist complements the work of the others to the fullest extent.

10. That special attention continue to be paid to the placing of area counsellors in assignments where their particular abilities can be used to the fullest. That provision be made for transferring an area counsellor if, following an initial appointment, the area counsellor, the principal, or staff, do not find the situation as productive as it should be.

11. That consideration be given to the possibility of exchange of area counsellors for short periods of time, so that a special ability can be made available to more than one area.

12. That senior officials consider developing a carefully controlled experiment whereby a school that does not find itself in agreement with the program of area counsellor services be allowed to try replacing its area counsellor by other specialist staff.

13. That practical steps be taken to provide suitable working facilities for the area counsellor, in particular a small conference room (or rooms), a telephone, and adequate furnishings, such as a desk and file drawer capable of being locked. Such facilities could enjoy a manifold use by various other auxiliary personnel.

14. That a simple area-counsellor record-keeping system be devised so that records may be easily transferred from school to school, care being taken to avoid unnecessary detail and to continue to respect confidentiality of information.

15. That every effort be made to build a firm liaison between the area counsellor and the developing local Resource Boards, in order to facilitate the linkage between the school and the community resources.

16. That a vigorous campaign be conducted to publicize the area counsellor services, not only in the community at large, but among the elementary school teaching staff.

17. That the properly descriptive name, "elementary school counsellor" be adopted in place of "area counsellor".

18. That the training program be maintained and developed.

19. That every care continue to be taken in the selection of personnel for the program, bearing in mind that personality factors far outweigh the advantages of training. That elementary school staffs and principals be urged to nominate teachers for the program.

20. That the Vancouver School Board approach the University of British Columbia with the aim of integrating suitable university studies with the area counsellor training program, and that the University be asked to set up a diploma or a post-graduate education program which would include suitable recognition of the area counsellor training program.

21. That encouragement be given to the commendable efforts towards continuing revision and adjustment of the program. That a section on adult counselling be added.

22. That efforts be continued towards utilizing the experience of practising area counsellors both for program revision and for discussion purposes within the program.

23. That wherever possible opportunity be provided for the guided development of the individual interests, background and personality factors of those enrolled in the program.

24. That the practicum be continued and expanded. That careful direction be given to ensure maximum use of the experience, including suitable follow-up discussion. That as far as possible regular school responsibilities in the mornings be arranged to articulate with the training sessions in the afternoons.

25. That video-tapes of practicum activities be considered for later analysis and discussion by the group as a whole.

26. That provision be made for brief refresher courses for area counsellors, in order to maintain contact with new developments.

27. That consideration be given to assessing the potential of members of the training program through provision of a conditional appointment or probationary year.

28. That since "training" does not adequately describe the program, thought be given to substituting such a term as "familiarization", "preparation", "specialist", or "qualifying".

APPENDIX A PRINCIPALS

THE AREA COUNSELLOR PROGRAM

IN VANCOUVER ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS

* * *

A QUESTIONNAIRE FOR ELEMENTARY SCHOOL PRINCIPALS

1. Show by circling, the grades with which the area counsellor works. Underline those given most attention.

   K. I. II. III. IV. V. VI. VII.

2. Following are categories of student problems dealt with by area counsellors. Let "1" indicate the greatest amount of time, "2" the next greatest, etc. to show the relative amount of time spent on each.

		Comment
a.	learning difficulties	--
b.	emotional disturbance	--
c.	other disturbing behaviour	--
d.	chronic withdrawal	--
e.	mental retardation	--
f.	physical disabilities	--
g.	absenteeism	--
h.	delinquency	--
i.	drug-related problems	--

3. The following are ways in which student referrals may be made to the area counsellor. Indicate those employed in your school by assigning a rank order of frequency of use.

   a. through the principal ____
   b. by the teacher ____
   c. by a nurse ____
   d. by the school mental health team or Screening Committee ____
   e. by a parent ____
   f. self-referral ____

4. Do you have any kind of staff coordinator or committee to work specifically with the area counsellor? _____. Comment on the desirability of having a committee or a coordinator to serve this function.

5. What school facilities are used by the area counsellor?

   Do you consider these adequate? _____

   Have you suggestions for improvement?

6. Describe briefly the means by which the school maintains records of interviews and other services provided by the area counsellor.

7. Are the area counsellor services supported by adequate secretarial and clerical help? _____

8. Are appropriate records made available to the area secondary school? _____

9. Are the graduates of the training program placed in a position where they can put their newly-acquired abilities to work for the improvement of the instructional program? (Comment)

PRINCIPALS & TEACHERS

THE AREA COUNSELLOR PROGRAM
IN VANCOUVER ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS

* * *

A QUESTIONNAIRE FOR PRINCIPALS AND TEACHERS IN ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS

A. OBJECTIVES

1. Briefly, what would you describe as the over-all objective of the area counsellor services?

2. Mention one or two specific area counsellor services which you think should be given priority.

3. What would you consider to be the principal student needs to be met by such a service?

4. The following identification and description of services have been referred to in various statements about the role of the area counsellor. In column I, check (✓) each service that you believe is provided by the area counsellor at your school. If you would like included any of the services not being provided at present, indicate by placing an X in the same column.

   In the three columns marked "Assessment", indicate by a check in the appropriate column (✓) how well you feel the services are meeting the needs of your school. (It is recognized that such an evaluation cannot give an exact measure. The following may be of some use as a guide: Consider that column "A" implies "as adequate as may be realistically expected"; column "B" implies "of some value and certainly better than nothing"; column "C" implies "time, money and effort could probably be better spent".)

   Under column III, show where appropriate, the relative amount of available time being given to each, "L" indicating those that take up a relatively large proportion of time, and "S" those that take up a relatively small proportion of time.

Space for comment may not always be sufficient. Try to keep remarks brief and use the back of the sheet if necessary. Indicate if you think that any of these do not properly fall within the scope of the counsellor's responsibilities. Space has been left at the end of the list so that you may add other appropriate services.

	I	II			III	IV
		Assessment				Remarks
		A	B	C		
1. Acts essentially as an elementary school counsellor.						
2. Consults with individual teachers.						
3. Advises individual teachers.						
4. Holds discussions with teacher groups.						
5. Assists with the in-service teacher training program.						
6. Confers with parents.						
7. Assists parents desiring study programs.						
8. Addresses parent-teacher and other community groups.						
9. Assists with pupil assessment and reporting to parents.						
10. Counsels individual students.						
11. Engages in student group counselling.						
12. Assists (by demonstration, etc.) with the school human relations program.						
13. Advises and assists with the school drug education program.						

	I	II			III	IV
		Assessment				Remarks
		A	B	C		
14. Advises and assists with the Family Life Education Program.						
15. Helps identify and assess learning disabilities.						
16. Engages in remedial teaching.						
17. Helps identify and assess behavioural disabilities.						
18. Helps correct behavioural disabilities.						
19. Advises on student referrals to specialized agencies.						
20. Facilitates student referrals.						
21. Acts as liaison with referral agencies.						
22. Promotes healthy inter-pupil relations.						
23. Specifically assists with relations between older and younger students.						
24. Assists the Learning Assistance Centre.						
25. Acts on the Screening Committee for the Learning Assistance Centre.						
26. Assists in recruiting volunteers to help with the Learning Assistance Centre.						
27. Assists with student orientation to secondary school.						

	I	II			III	IV
		Assessment				Remarks
		A	B	C		
28. Acts as liaison with the area secondary school.						
29. Provides a liaison with alternative programs.						
30. Assists in course planning.						
31. Consults on school attendance problems.						
32. Acts as liaison with the local Resource Board.						
33. Works in close co-operation with the Public Health Nurse.						
34. Is concerned with community development programs.						
35. Utilizes services of appropriate teacher aides.						
36. Is an active and useful member of the school-based team.						
37. Provides a liaison with community resource personnel.						
38.						
39.						
40.						
41.						

5. Where you are less than satisfied that the objectives of the area counsellor are being reached, check the reason or reasons you would give:

		Comment
a.	Insufficient time available.	___
b.	Area counsellor needs more assistance	___
c.	School not providing fully effective cooperation.	___
d.	Lack of suitable community liaison.	___
e.	Difficulty in securing parent cooperation.	___
f.	Liaison between school and VSB office could be improved.	___
g.	One or more responsibilities (specify) accepted by area counsellor would be better assumed by other team members.	___
h.	Responsibilities (specify) undertaken by other team members would be more properly assumed by the area counsellor.	___
i.	Adjustments required to the training program for area counsellors.	___
j.	Selection procedures for area counsellors need attention.	___

B. PROCEDURES

1. Approximately what percentage of the area counsellor's time would you say is given to preventive measures? ____%

   Approximately what percentage is given to remedial measures? ____%

2. The area counsellor aims at correcting root causes, not just alleviating symptoms. Can you exemplify this through area counsellor methods you may have observed?

3. Mention the specialist agencies and community groups most commonly used as referrals by the area counsellor, giving a rank order to the value you believe they have.

AGENCY	VALUE (Rank Order)

C. GENERAL EFFECTIVENESS

1. Do you believe there are evidences of the effectiveness of the use of area counsellors through improved relations:

	Comment
- among students on a similar grade level?	____
- between senior and junior students?	____
- between staff and students?	____
- between school and community?	____
- between home and school?	____
- between the elementary and secondary school?	____

2. Do you think that the area counsellor has contributed to a reduction of:

- absenteeism?	____
- truancy?	____
- drop-out rate?	____

3. In what ways is the area counsellor able to serve average and superior students?

4. Is the area counsellor able to help build constructive staff relations?

5. What do you consider to be the chief value of the area counsellor services to your school?

Comment on the extent of your satisfaction with the services of area counsellors.

6. Could any of the area counsellor <u>services</u> be better handled in another way? If so, please suggest.

7. Do you have evidence of the acceptability of the services by:

	Comment
- the principal	____
- teachers	____
- other members of the team	____
- other agencies	____
- parents	____
- problem students	____
- non-problem students	____

What change(s) or potential change(s) do you notice in your role as (principal/ teacher) as a result of the activities of an area counsellor on your teaching team?

D. THE TRAINING PROGRAM

1. In regard to the area counsellor training program, would your experience suggest that the program is generally adequate? ____

   What sections if any, could be shortened?

   What sections if any, could be omitted?

2. What additional material or emphasis, if any, might be considered?

3. Have you any comment on the kind or extent of the practicum?

4. Have you any suggestions regarding the procedures used for the selection of candidates?

5. Do you feel that the aims of the training program might be better achieved in some other way? (Comment)

Thank you for the time and care you have given to the completion of this questionnaire. Any additional comment about the program will be gladly accepted.

These questionnaires were designed as an information gathering device, not primarily for critical evaluation, certainly not for the assessment of practising area counsellors. While it is difficult, if not impossible, to summarize the responses in every case, some conclusions may be of interest. A proportion of this was done in several tables included in the Report. Other findings are given in the following:

From the Principals' Report (numbers refer to Report items).

1. All grades, with some emphasis 1-4, grade 7 a runner-up.

2. Emotional disturbance, learning difficulties, other disturbing behaviour -- in that order. The remaining items were far down the list, virtually in the order given. Undoubtedly some of these are already "screened out" from the elementary school scene.

3. Principal, teacher, Screening Committee, nurse -- in that order. The other two trailed far behind.

4. 64% said yes. Others mentioned that a small school presented less need for a staff coordinator.

5. The roof was about the only place not mentioned. 49% said inadequate; 5% were undecided.

6. Too varied for meaningful comment.

7. 63% said yes.

8. Uniformly done, corroborated by secondary schools. Liaison is well established apparently.

9. Replies uniformly indicated a willingness to assist training through practical experience.

Report from Principals and Teachers.

A. Covered by tables.

B 1. Preventive: 10 - 20%; Remedial: 70 - 90%

B 2. Reference to such things as group guidance "games", Family Life Program, etc.

B 3. A bewildering array, including local variations of Community Centres, etc.

C 1. Generally high evidence, "staff and students" leading; "school and community" next; "senior and junior students" lowest.

2. No conclusive answers.

3. Supports conclusions from B2, scarcity of time the chief obstacle.

4. Item not well understood. At bottom, "Not applicable", at top, "Brings staff together in understanding of problems".

5. Liaison, help with problems, group work, help for parents -- in that order. Over 80% well satisfied (sometimes with reservations as a result of limited time); 12 - 13% conditional approval; 6 - 7% some doubt.

6. Nothing concrete except, in one or two cases, "lowering the pupil-teacher ratio". Not being a statistician the writer has been unable to reach an intelligent conclusion as to how much the addition of 18½ people would be able to reduce the pupil-teacher ratio in Vancouver. This is a concept beyond the scope of this report, but the writer cannot help wondering about the value of a minimal reduction in class size as compared to the value of a support service.

7. High acceptability reported for principal, teachers, and other team members. Various difficulties mentioned as cause of uneven acceptability by parents -- cultural differences, employment and so on.

D. The Training Program: Many respondents declined to answer, pleading ignorance.

D 1. 90% said acceptable as is.

D 2. Refresher courses, counselling for adults, diagnosis and remediation of learning difficulties, more practical experience.

D 3. From "excellent" to "inadequate". General feeling it would benefit by extension.

D 4. The expected emphases: people with stability, practical background, etc.

D 5. No significant alternatives. (e.g. "extend the program"; "shorten the program").

APPENDIX B

Area Counsellor Training Program - Vancouver Schools

1. Please indicate the year in which you were enrolled in the Training Program.

   1973-74 1972-73 1971-72 Other_____

2. What university courses have you taken in Guidance and Counselling?

3. How would you rate the value of the area counsellor program on the following bases? (Use "1" for excellent, "2" good, "3" fair, and "4" if doubtful value)

   - as upgrading your knowledge of the behavioral sciences as related to the area counsellor's work _____
   - as providing a practical experience in group processes _____
   - as an introduction to referral agencies _____
   - to you as a person (i.e. Did you find it personally valuable?) _____
   - as compared to universtiy courses you have taken in this field _____

   Comment:

4. Similarly, how would you rate the value of the following, as they were provided in the program in which you participated?

   Comment

   - field trips _____
   - lectures by visiting specialists _____
   - counsellor practicum _____
   - printed materials _____
   - reference lists _____

5. Do you have any suggestions regarding modifications of the Program (as you know it) as to:

   - length
   - time pattern (1/2 day per day)
   - deletions
   - additions
   - change of approach
   - change of emphasis

6. What is your reaction to such suggestions as to fee requirement, university involvement and/or credit, other alternatives to the Program, provision for optional emphases within the program, etc.? Comments on these or other suggestions regarding the development of the program would be welcome. For example, how do you view the program viz-a-viz the changing social and educational scene?

(Please use reverse side for further comment)

While it was possible to discuss the training program with all present area counsellors, it was felt desirable to give all graduates of the past three years plus a random sampling of those of former years an opportunity to comment.

1. Personal data.

2. Personal data.

3. "Introduction to referral agencies", "Personally valuable" tied for leading position. "Academic upgrading" next. "Group processes" last.

4. Field trips, lectures, references, printed materials, practicum — in that order.

5. Little agreement on direction of change; most appear well satisfied with directions being taken.

6. No one favored fees, and some expressed astonishment at the suggestion. There was a mixed response to University involvement, many making a strong plea for maintaining the present structure and approach. With this as a proviso there seemed to be little strong opposition to the suggestion, and some were definitely in favor. There was general agreement on "options" if the idea proves practicable. The majority of respondents felt that the program had sufficient "built-in" evaluation and revision machinery, and was continuing to meet the needs of the area counsellors.

Some suggestions:

Practical counselling training.
Remediation of learning difficulties.
Adult counselling.
Administrative training.
Group leadership training.
Classroom management skills.
Study skills.
Elementary school curriculum.

APPENDIX C

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Full credit must be given to the elementary school staffs who spent a good deal of time in meetings, considering the questionnaire; it was not an easy assignment. The comments were usually patient, sometimes petulant, once in a while touched with welcome humor and in nearly every case, valuable. Thanks should also go to the school principals -- but their task was easier since they had to reach a consensus of one only. Teachers individually and in groups also deserve thanks for their willingness to meet and discuss aspects of the study.

The suggestions made by area counsellors past and present and by the lecturers who are part of the training program were also much appreciated.

Metropolitan Health staff, and other interested groups and individuals contributed a great deal that was of value. Their help was most welcome.

To the Vancouver School Board staff, for their comments, and their patience and helpfulness in the face of a trying labor situation go special thanks; in particular, Mr. Allan Moodie whose unfailing cooperation greatly eased the organizational details.